

HONORING JESSICA GRAHAM

**HON. SAM GRAVES**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 4, 2009*

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Jessica Graham, a very special young lady who has earned a spot on the National USA Karate Team. I join with Jessica's family and friends in expressing best wishes on her significant achievement. I commend Jessica on attaining such a high honor and wish her the best of luck as she competes in the World Karate Championships in Dublin, Ireland, this October.

Gaining recognition for this remarkable achievement reflects both Jessica's hard work and dedication. As a member of the stand-alone Missouri team, as well as the team with the largest number of students to be selected from a single school, Jessica should be proud of her accomplishments. She is a member of a celebrated team and has represented the state of Missouri well. With such drive and determination I am certain Jessica will be a strong contribution to the national team.

Madam Speaker, I respectfully request you join with me in commending Jessica Graham for her success with Sensei Mark Long's Shotokan Karate team and for her effort put forth in achieving this prestigious goal.

**PERSONAL EXPLANATION****HON. TIMOTHY V. JOHNSON**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 4, 2009*

Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois. Madam Speaker, unfortunately Monday night, November 2, 2009, and the morning of November 3, 2009 I was unable to cast my votes on H.R. 1168, H. Res. 291, S. 509, H.R. 3949, H. Res. 398, and H. Res. 866 due to a scheduled town hall meeting in Cerro Gordo, Illinois.

Had I been present for Rollcall No. 832, on suspending the Rules and passing H.R. 1168, the Veterans Retraining Act of 2009, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for Rollcall No. 833, on suspending the Rules and passing H. Res. 291, Recognizing the crucial role of assistance dogs in helping wounded veterans live more independent lives, expressing gratitude to The Tower of Hope, and supporting the goals and ideals of creating a Tower of Hope Day, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for Rollcall No. 834, on suspending the Rules and passing S. 509, to authorize a major medical facility project at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Walla Walla, Washington, and for other purposes, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for Rollcall No. 835, on suspending the Rules and passing H.R. 3949, Veterans' Small Business Assistance and Servicemembers Protection Act of 2009, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for Rollcall No. 836, on suspending the Rules and passing H. Res. 398, Recognizing the 60th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift's success, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for Rollcall No. 837, on suspending the Rules and passing H. Res.

866, Expressing support for designation of a National Veterans History Project Week to encourage public participation in a nationwide project that collects and preserves the stories of the men and women who served our Nation in times of war and conflict, I would have voted "aye."

It is my fervent hope that my absence in no way be interpreted as a lack of support and enthusiasm for these important issues and undertakings. Congress' schedule in recent days has been subject to sometimes unpredictable additions and subtractions of days. As the original schedule had established an adjournment date of Oct. 30, 2009, I felt safe in scheduling a town hall meeting the evening of Monday, Nov. 2, for the purpose of meeting with and hearing from my constituents—the voters and citizens who are critical in guiding my votes and my conscience on the important issues we all face.

**CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF  
LABOR PIONEER AND CIVIL  
RIGHTS LEADER WILLIE JAMES****HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 4, 2009*

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today in memoriam of my dear friend, Labor Pioneer and Civil Rights Leader Willie James, who departed this life peacefully on Friday, October 30th, 2009. This strong spirited and God-fearing man dedicated his entire life to uplifting the hopes and dreams of African Americans and people in the Labor Movement and we are all consumed by his passing. In February of 1996, Willie James made labor history, when he became the first African American elected to serve as President of the Transport Workers Union, Local 100.

A native New Yorker, Willie James was born in Harlem Hospital on April 28, 1936 to the late Charles James and Geneva Nelson Surrency. From 1954 through 1957, Willie served his country in the United States Air Force as a proud member of the 80th Supply Squadron, Depot Special, and received the Good Conduct Medal for his demonstration of honor, efficiency and fidelity with great distinction. While in the service, he and a few other airmen formed a doo-wop vocal group that covered songs by the Platters and other groups. Willie was an accomplished Baritone and often told how the group was so good that people in Morocco thought they were the real Platters. After serving in the Air Force he returned to Harlem finding work as a shipping clerk.

Later in life he developed an attraction for exotic plants and beautiful flowers and in 1964, God blessed him with his own beautiful rose when he met and married Rosabelle. Their marriage lasted 41 years when she departed this life in 2005. Shortly after marriage he became a New York City Police Officer and in 1967 he began his career with the Transport Workers Union, TWU, Local 100 under the Manhattan and Bronx Surface Transit Operating Authority, MABSTOA.

He started with a metal-plating company where he was assigned to a unit with workers who were perceived as derelict workers beset by alcohol and laziness. Not looking down

upon anyone but seeing the opportunity to help others; he discovered his masterful skill of organizing workers. He told the workers that if they worked with him he would make a case to the management to get them higher wages. After a series of meetings and negotiations with the bosses he won them a raise, and developed a promotional ladder for himself.

He rose through the ranks of TWU Local 100 and held a series of positions: MABSTOA DIVISION II Bus Operator; Division II Recording Secretary; Vice Chairman and Chairman at Amsterdam Garage; the Executive Board's Director of Education and Training; and Financial Secretary Treasurer. As he continued climbing the ladder of TWU he recalled how he continuously endured blatant racism.

Defying the odds in 1996, as the first African American elected to serve as President of the Transport Workers Union Local 100 Willie set the mark that raised the bar for all of us. Willie continued to climb the ranks in the TWU and in the labor movement. Serving as Vice President of the New York AFL-CIO; Vice President of the New York City Central Labor Council and Vice President of the International Transport Workers Union.

In addition to his sufficient contributions to the labor movement Willie James was a senior executive for The Municipal Credit Union serving in a variety of roles. From 1983-1992, he served as Upgrade Training Director; from 1992-1994, he served as Treasurer; from 1994-2000, he served as President; from 2007-2009, he served as Acting Chairman; and in May 2009, Willie served as the Chairman. The Municipal Credit Union is one of the oldest and largest Credit Unions in the State of New York with more than 300,000 members and \$1.3 Billion dollars in assets.

In the struggle for Civil and Human Rights, Willie James, a Prince Hall Master Mason of Joppa 55 and founding Member of the Society of Afro-American Transit Employees, SAATE, furthered his accomplishments and dedication to helping others by serving on the Executive Board Committee of the New York Branch of the NAACP; Executive Board Member of the Black Trade Union Leadership Committee; Executive Board of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionist; Member of the 100 Black Men of America, Incorporated; and Member of the Board of 500 MEN Empowerment.

Willie was also deeply involved in many civic and community organizations. He was an ordained Deacon at Mount Hermon Baptist Church in the Bronx, New York; and a very active Member of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Harlem, New York. He served as a Deacon at Rockland Baptist Church in Pomona, New York until his death.

Willie James firmly believed that when the opportunity presents itself, one should selflessly help somebody without expecting something in return. He often quoted, "Just ask the person who you are helping to pass the baton of love and concern to others in this race of life." Willie loved to sing and at every labor march and rally he used his mighty baritone voice to sing out against injustices and inequality; for fair wages and jobs; and Human Rights for all. I will always remember the songs of freedom and struggle that bellowed from the heart of this moral man.

Willie and his late wife Rosabelle leaves to cherish their memory: His sister, Janet Surrency Monroe; two children, Charles James and Daisy Moyd; three grandsons,